

Date

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman _____:

On behalf of the members of the (EMS agency name), we greatly appreciate you addressing the fiscal challenges facing our nation. Currently, the Super Committee is focusing on ways to reduce expenditures. However, it is vital that we also maintain access to ambulance services which are a critical part of our local health care and emergency response systems. We urge you to correct the problem facing the Medicare ambulance fee schedule.

The Medicare ambulance fee schedule is chronically underfunded. In May 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report which found that ambulance service providers are paid on average 6 percent below cost in urban and rural areas to provide ambulance services to Medicare patients. Even before the release of the GAO report, Congress recognized this underfunding and provided temporary Medicare ambulance relief every year since 2003. The annual threat of funding cuts caused by expiring relief provisions has hampered the efforts of ambulance service providers to hire new staff, update equipment and continue to provide services throughout all of their communities.

Ambulance service providers deliver often life-saving emergency medical care to all who are in need, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes ambulance service providers, who are unable to manage their payer mix to make up for below cost Medicare reimbursement, unique among Medicare providers. Where other providers may choose to limit the number of Medicare patients they treat in order to stay economically viable, ambulance service providers cannot and do not select their patients. Michigan EMS agencies are committed to continuing to provide high quality care to all Americans but need meaningful ambulance relief to be able to continue doing so. It is therefore especially critical that ambulance relief be included in a deficit reduction bill.

Again, thank you for your work on behalf of the people in your district. If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Tristan North, American Ambulance Association Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, at 202-486-4888 or tnorth@the-aaa.org.

Sincerely,